Spouse Battlemind Training

Helping You and Your Family Transition from Deployments

Training Timeframe: POST-DEPLOYMENT

The Nature of Military Life

Military Life is Hard:

- Frequent military deployments
- Frequent training exercises
- Long duty days
- Weekend duty
- Frequent military moves (PCSs)
- Fear of death and/or serious injury
- Distance from extended family
- Financial strain

The Nature of Military Life

Military Life has Benefits:

- Financial stability/Retirement benefits
- Health Care
- Community and sense of belonging
- Education and job training
- Overseas assignments
- Part of a tradition
- Resilient families
- Pride and patriotism

Spouse Battlemind

Spouse Battlemind is the Spouse's ability to face deployments with resilience and strength, allowing easier separations and smoother reunions. Key components include:

- Independence
  - The capability of having a fulfilling and meaningful life as part of an Army Centric Family.
- Resiliency
  - The ability to overcome setbacks and obstacles and to maintain positive thoughts during times of adversity.

Deployments and separations can be a positive growth experience for you and your family. However, some issues may arise that could negatively affect your or your family's well-being.

Battlemind Training for Soldiers

Soldier Battlemind is the Soldier's inner strength to face fear and adversity in combat with courage.

Buddies (cohesion) vs. Withdrawal
Accountability vs. Controlling Behavior
Targeted vs. Inappropriate Aggression
Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance
Lethally Armed vs. "Locked and Loaded" at home
Emotional Control vs. Detachment
Mission and OPSEC vs. Secretiveness
Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt
Non-Defensive (combat) vs. Aggressive Driving
Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict

Battlemind skills help Soldiers survive in combat but may lead to problems if they are not adapted for use at home.

Battlemind Training for Spouses

Working on this set of Battlemind skills throughout the military deployment cycle will help increase your and your family's resiliency.

Bonds (Social Support)
Adding/Subtracting Family Roles
Taking Control
Talking it Out
Loyalty and Commitment
Emotional Balance
Mental Health and Readiness
Independence
Navigating the Army System
Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

Bonds (Social Support)

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Often made strong ties with their fellow Soldiers.

At Home, Spouses: May have developed new friends, strengthened existing friendships, became more involved in the Army community and participated in new activities. Some Spouses may have returned home to their families during the deployment.

Potential Conflicts: Soldiers may want to spend more time with their buddies than their Spouses. The fact that Spouses' new friends, strengthened friendships and new activities were developed without Soldiers may feel threatening to them.

Bonds (Social Support)

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Actions Spouses Can Take: Talk with your Soldier about how to balance the time spent between family and friends. Introduce new friends to your Soldier; don’t hide new friendships or activities.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Talk with your Spouse about how to balance the time spent between your family and buddies. Respect, and if possible, become involved in, your Spouse's friendships and new interests. Appreciate those who helped your Spouse in your absence.

Adding/Subtracting Family Roles

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Were removed from the daily lives of their families and missed family events (anniversaries, births, graduations, birthdays, sporting events, etc.).

At Home, Spouses: Performed roles that might otherwise be shared.

Potential Conflicts: Spouses and Soldiers may resist resuming and sharing roles. Children may resist Soldiers' return to authority. Soldiers may feel left out and fail to actively participate in family roles.

Adding/Subtracting Family Roles

B A T T L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Help your Soldier resume family roles, despite possible resistance from your kids. Share day-to-day responsibilities upon reunion.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Upon your return, resume an active role, but don't force it too much, too soon. Don't let changes in roles and/or responsibilities cause you to withdraw from the family. Understand that your Spouse may need a break.

Taking Control

B A **T** T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Maintained strict control of their weapons and gear in order to survive and were not in control of what was going on at home.

At Home, Spouses: Were the head of the household.

Potential Conflicts: Soldiers may have an increased need for order and control upon return. Spouses and Soldiers may have different priorities for the family's time and money. Soldiers may treat the household as a military unit.

Taking Control

B A **T** T L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Renegotiate priorities and incorporate those of your Soldier. Recognize your Soldier's need for order and control may be due in part to his/her deployment experiences.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Respect and appreciate how your Spouse managed the household during your deployment. Be flexible and avoid treating family members like subordinates. Let go of the little things. If you have children, understand that they tend to like routine and predictability.

Talking it Out

B A T **T** L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Shared mission-specific information on a need-to-know basis and many had limited access to phone or email.

At Home, Spouses: Could share only a limited amount of what occurred during the deployment due to communication limitations.

Potential Conflicts: Spouses, Soldiers and children can't know all of the ways the deployment affected one another. Spouses may immediately want to know everything about Soldiers' deployments, but Soldiers may not be willing or ready to tell.

Talking it Out

B A T **T** L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Your Soldier may not share every deployment experience with you. Let the story come out with time, and in his/her own words. Deployment is difficult for both Soldiers and family members; be prepared to hear all sides of the story.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Don't expect your Spouse to understand what it is like in a combat environment unless you share your experiences. Tell as much of your story as you feel you should, especially to your children. Recognize that your Spouse and children have a deployment story to share as well.

Loyalty and Commitment

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Needed to know their Spouses were committed and looked forward to their return.

At Home, Spouses: Needed to know their Soldiers were also committed.

Potential Conflicts: Both Spouses and Soldiers may have issues of mistrust and jealousy and be concerned about relationship commitment.

Loyalty and Commitment

B A T T L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Tell your Soldier how much you missed him/her and how you coped with being apart. Address any issues of mistrust and get help if needed.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Tell your Spouse you love and appreciate her/him. Practice saying, “Thanks”, and say it often. Don’t hesitate to get help for issues of mistrust.

Emotional Balance

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Controlled their emotions in order to be successful in missions.

At Home, Spouses: Managed individual and family emotional well-being with less emotional support from Soldiers.

Potential Conflicts: Spouse or Soldier expectations for emotional and physical intimacy may not be met upon return. The emotional control Soldiers used while they were deployed may lead to detachment or anger during reintegration. Children's' emotional responses to reintegration can range from detachment to clinging to the absent parent.

Emotional Balance

B A T T L **E** M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Be patient. Emotional detachment can be common in Soldiers returning from combat. It will take time and effort from you and your Soldier to renew emotional and physical bonds.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Appreciate the difference between sex and emotional intimacy. Spend time with each of your family members individually; put in the time and effort to reconnect physically and emotionally with your Spouse. Practice the full range of emotions; don't limit yourself to anger or detachment. Express yourself in a variety of ways (email, phone calls, flowers, notes, etc.).

Mental Health and Readiness

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In Combat, Soldiers: Were constantly alert, revved- up, aggressive when necessary, and may have worked long hours.

At Home, Spouses: Maintained individual and family mental well-being.

Potential Conflicts: Soldiers may display behaviors that cause Spouses or children to worry, including inappropriate anger, difficulty sleeping (including nightmares), startling easily, and excessive drinking. Soldiers who need help may not seek it. Spouses and children who need mental health services may have difficulty accessing care.

Mental Health and Readiness

B A T T L E **M** I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Behaviors that are causing problems in your family need to be addressed. Realize that you might not be the person your Soldier will accept help from. Know what mental health resources are available for you and your family.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Recognize changes in yourself that might be signs you should get help; seek assistance if you need it. Accept help from others, including your Spouse. Avoid pushing away or lashing out at those who try to help you. Don't attempt to avoid or treat problems with alcohol or drugs.

Independence

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Made decisions that revolved around their deployment and were less available to participate in household decisions.

At Home, Spouses: Functioned alone or as a single parent by making household decisions with less input from Soldiers.

Potential Conflicts: Soldiers may want to change household decisions that were made during the deployment. Spouses may feel they need to give up doing things they enjoyed during the deployment, which may lead to resentment. Soldiers may feel left out or excluded due to Spouses' increased independence.

Independence

B A T T L E M I N D

Actions Spouses Can Take: Don’t assume life will be as it was before or during the deployment. Take into account your Soldier's preference about household decisions. Be willing to compromise.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Respect and appreciate your Spouse’s decisions that were made during the deployment. Your home life will likely be different than it was before you deployed. Don’t fix what’s working; ask how you can help.

Navigating the Army System

B A T T L E M I N D

In Combat, Soldiers: Followed rules and regulations.

At Home, Spouses: Navigated the Army environment, using available resources in order to better integrate into the military community.

Potential Conflicts: Spouses may be angry and resentful for having to deal with a complicated, bureaucratic organization (TRICARE, DEERS, etc.) while Soldiers were gone.

Navigating the Army System

BATTLEMIND

Actions Spouses Can Take: Continue learning the Army system by asking questions. Be patient, it takes time. Recognize that you need to maintain the skills you obtained for future deployments and separations.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Share all information you have about Army services with your Spouses. Recognize that it can be difficult to navigate the Army system; help your Spouse with the navigation.

Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

BATTLEMIND

In Combat, Soldiers: Literally put their lives on the line for their fellow Soldiers in service of their country.

At Home, Spouses: Often sacrificed their own needs and desires (careers, educational goals, proximity to family and friends, etc.) by placing their needs last.

Potential Conflicts: Both Spouses and Soldiers may feel that they have sacrificed a lot and are not being fully appreciated.

Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

B A T T L E M I N **D**

Actions Spouses Can Take: Tell your Soldier that you appreciate his/her sacrifice and that you know that being a Soldier is difficult.

Actions Soldiers Can Take: Be aware that you are not the only one making sacrifices. Show your Spouses how much you appreciate his/her hard work and encourage them to pursue his/her own interests.

Cues Spouses Might Need Help

If any of the following are severe, persistent or interfere with your daily life:

- Feeling depressed and down
- Repeated crying episodes
- Feeling angry, tense, irritable, hopeless and/or resentful
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Significant appetite changes
- Not finding fun in things previously enjoyed
- Using medications, illegal drugs or alcohol to cope
- Taking out frustrations on others
- Suicidal or homicidal thinking, intent, or actions
- Isolating yourself or withdrawing from important relationships
- Family, coworkers or friends tell you that you need help

Cues Soldiers Might Need Help

If any of the following are severe, persist or interfere with your daily life:

- Strong memories, nightmares or sleeping problems
- Easily startled
- Conflict, arguing, anger and hostility
- Excessive use of alcohol or other substances
- Performance problems at work or home
- Distant from Spouse or children; talking of a divorce or separation unwanted by Spouse
- Aggressive driving
- Feeling down or not able to enjoy life; not making future plans
- Family members, NCOs or friends tell you that you need help
- Suicidal or homicidal thinking, intent, or actions

Cues Children Might Need Help

Look for *changes* in how your child normally behaves and problems that persist:

- Irritability, problems controlling his/her temper
- Getting into fights, hitting, biting, and/or kicking
- Having problems paying attention or sitting still
- Withdrawing from friends, becoming a loner at school or at home
- Being unhappy, sad or depressed
- Academic problems
- School personnel, friends, or others tell you that your child needs help

Mental and Behavioral Health Resources for Families

- Military Chaplain or Civilian Religious Personnel
- Mental/Behavioral Health Services
- Army/Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647
  or www.MilitaryOneSource.com
- Army Community Services (ACS)
- Social Work Services (SWS)
- Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
- Child Youth Services (CYS)
- New Parent Support Program (NPSP)
- School Counselor

Point of Contact and Disclaimer

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This presentation contains a combination of research findings and recommendations, many of which are based on personal observations and experiences. Therefore, the opinions and views expressed here are those of the Land Combat Study Team, and should not be considered representing the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.